ASSESSMENT DESIGN ISSUES AND THE
COMMONWEALTH ACCOUNTABILITY TESTING SYSTEM (CATS) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Assessment Element	Current Assessment – 1998 – 2006	Recommendation for Proposed Assessment – 2007 – 2010	Rationale for Change	NTAPAA Comments (not provided in all areas)
Purpose of the Assessment	School accountability	School accountability, but consistent with requests from Kentucky's educators and NTAPAA's parameters, incorporating elements to allow a measure of student accountability and a measure of accountability to students.	The field has asked KDE to address issues that have arisen over time regarding student motivation, and the need for additional information for teachers to inform instruction.	NTAPAA feels the designs discussed would support school accountability and student reporting for lower stakes. Higher student stakes (such as graduation, promotion) would require a somewhat different design.
Measures Included to Calculate the School's Accountability Index	1. Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT) – criterion referenced 2. A norm-referenced component (NRT) (currently given at end-of-primary (grade 3), grade 6 and grade 9; will be in augmented form in 2006 to meet the NCLB testing requirements in grades 3-8) and 3. Nonacademic indicators – dropout (only at middle and high), retention, attendance and transition to adult life.	1. Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT) 2. A norm-referenced component (NRT) (legislatively required for at least once in elementary, middle and high school; change to embedded format for the new CATS test is being recommended by staff; see pages 6and 7) 3. Nonacademic indicators – dropout (only at middle and high), retention, attendance and transition to adult life. 4. Pilot of other than test-based indicators of performance for Practical Living/ Vocational Studies and performance events in Arts and Humanities. Staff recommends for the first two years of the assessment contract, the current method of assessing Arts and Humanities and Practical Living/Vocational Studies be continued and that concurrently a pilot study be implemented in a selected number of school districts to determine the large-scale viability of an assessment not accomplished through on-demand, large scale work. Successful completion of the pilot study would result in a recommendation to take an alternate approach to scale in the next contract period. (Note: Attachment A-1 will be sent under separate cover and will propose an alternate option that will be discussed at the April meeting.)	Elements 1-3 are current components of accountability in Kentucky's system that have worked well and are considered valid and reliable by NTAPAA. An NRT will be administered in three grades through 2005 to comply with state law. To comply with NCLB, an augmented NRT will be administered in selected grades in 2006 and perhaps in 2007. NCLB does not require an NRT, but the augmented NRT was the only way to meet the federal law within available budget and timelines. For the future, a consistent design should be used across all grades assessed. Adequate assessment of Arts and Humanities and Practical Living /Vocational Studies is difficult because of the inability to be able to adequately address the broad nature of the disciplines through the limited numbers of questions available, as well as the inability to measure arts and wellness.	NTAPAA agreed that a single test design should be used across grades to promote comparability for assessment, accountability and instructional purposes. NTAPAA discussed the difficulties inherent in assessing arts & humanities and practical living/vocational studies and acknowledged they were unable to recommend satisfactory alternatives during their limited time for discussion. They were sympathetic to considering assessment not accomplished through on-demand, large-scale work but acknowledged the operational difficulties and the large degree of support needed for such a venture.

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Additional state-provided measures not included as part of a School's Accountability Index	None	1. Formative assessments 2. Diagnostic assessments 3. End-of-course assessments Staff recommends the parallel development of formative, diagnostic and end-of-course assessments to support and complement the accountability assessment.	KDE has over a the last year made several attempts to try to accommodate requests from the field for more standards-based units of study, model lessons, formative assessments and teaching tools that teachers felt were needed to help students reach proficiency. As a result, the Seven Steps Forward in Assessment were outlined and the implementation of a broader based system to provide needed supports to teachers is in process. Upon completion, this diagnostic/formative assessment process will complement the CATS assessment system and allow for additional local options for student accountability.	NTAPAA was very supportive of KDE's intent to have formative/diagnostic and other local assessments that would complement the formal student assessments used for school accountability. They commented that it would be important to have considerable coordination between the two systems.
Grades Tested and Content Areas Covered	**KCCT** – Reading – 4, 7, 10 Math – 5, 8, 11 Science – 4, 7, 11 Social Studies – 5, 8, 11 On Demand Writing – 4, 7, 12 Arts and Humanities – 5, 8, 11 Practical Living/Vocational Studies – 5, 8, 10 Writing Portfolio – 4, 7, 12 Alternate Portfolio – 4, 8, 12 **NRT** – End of Primary (3), 6, 9 (in 2006 will go to an augmented NRT to obtain 3 – 8 reading and math scores as required by NCLB)	KCCT - Staff recommends assessment by content and grade level as outlined in Attachment A-2. NRT - In the areas in which assessment at grade level is not mandated (areas other than reading and math 3 – 8), staff recommends assessment by grade span.	The basis for the initial content area and grade level assessment decisions are the requirements of NCLB, which requires assessment in reading and math at grades 3-8 and once in high school, and science once per grade span. Writing assessment placements are the result of Board decisions. Decisions made on the placement of the remainder of the items reflect staff opinion that continuing assessments across grade spans (instead of at grade level) and keeping the assessments aligned whenever possible to the content areas and grade spans	Overall - NTAPAA encouraged testing to be spread across grade levels, and to continue assessing a broader range of content areas. The distribution of content areas by grades should consider many factors, including effect on school accountability, teacher workload, and alignment with significant grades in the curriculum. They encouraged the KBE to have a strong rationale for any policy decisions concerning the spread of assessment across grade levels. Science and Social Studies – While not engaging in extensive discussion, NTAPAA did note that the test design for reading and math could be extended to science and social studies if the decision were made to assess a single grade of content in each

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			currently assessed would not have a significant negative instructional impact but would cause the least disruption to the field.	grade span. Presumably more matrix items and/or forms would be needed if KDE continues to assess a grade span of content.
Number of test forms, numbers and weights of OR and MC items.	**KCCT** – There are six forms of the test that are matrixed, i.e., do not share common items across all forms. Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies all have 6 open response (OR) and 24 multiple-choice (MC) questions per form. Arts and Humanities (A&H) and Practical Living/Vocational Studies (PL/VS) have 2 OR and 8 MC questions per form. There is one, ninety-minute on-demand writing prompt per form. Weighting is 67% OR and 33% MC. **NRT** - Kentucky administers one form of the CTBS/5 Terra Nova Survey edition with multiple-choice items in reading/language arts and mathematics at the end of primary, grades 6 and 9.	Staff recommends options for the assessment design, including number of test forms and numbers and weights of multiple-choice and open-response items, as outlined in Attachment A-3.	The recommended design options include the use of both common and matrix items, which allows for expanding the purposes for which the assessment could be validly used. The numbers and types of questions should allow for necessary Core Content coverage and must be sufficient to provide the comparability of student data necessary to support student data analyses. The use of open-response and multiple-choice items reflects the desire to influence instruction that will support active student learning. Continuing to weigh the open-response items more heavily than the multiple-choice items reflects the Board's preference from the previous RFP.	
		Based on NTAPAA's discussion, staff do not recommend including additional item formats, such as multiple-choice with explanation or short constructed response.	Because NTAPAA saw few advantages in shorter constructed response formats, and because of the cost and additional training requirements for item development of different types, staff recommend against their inclusion at this time.	NTAPAA members generally saw few advantages in shorter constructed response formats, based on the formats with which they were acquainted.
		Staff recommends continuing to maximize the number of open-response items per student. Per	It is felt that the inclusion of such items promotes both writing instruction across the	NTAPAA noted that Kentucky's test design should retain substantial open-response

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		NTAPAA's recommendation, staff would not recommend going below three open-response items per form per content area and grade level.	curriculum and instruction that addresses higher order thinking skills.	(OR) items of the length, complexity, and format currently used if the state continues to value those types of performances. When pressed about possibly shortening the testing time, an NTAPAA member gave the opinion that the total number of OR items could be shortened possibly to as few as three.
		Staff recommends continuing to express the KBE's preference for demonstration of higher order thinking skills through the continuation of heavier weights for open-response items. However, staff also recommends including in the RFP a specification that the multiple-choice questions be designed specifically to measure higher order thinking skills, consistent with the test blueprint.	Heavier weighting on open-response sends a message to the field that instruction that prepares students to perform well on tasks that assess higher order thinking skills are most valued and will pay off with the highest dividends. Staff also recommends pursuing inclusion of multiple-choice items that will address higher order thinking skills to assure that all items are challenging students to higher performance levels.	
		Staff is recommending that the assessment remain at the current length or if possible, be slightly shortened both overall and for the content areas.	Comments from the field indicate a feeling they currently spend sufficient time on the assessment and would not support a longer assessment. Staff supports shortening the assessment in the event that it is possible to do so and maintain desired content coverage.	
		Given that the state is operating under tight fiscal constraints, staff recommends including any cost-saving measures possible to the extent that they may be included without jeopardizing assessment content and objectives.	Staff will implement all measures possible to ensure fiscal prudence in the assessment design.	

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Alignment with Core Content Standards	The current assessment is aligned with the Core Content standards, as they existed prior to KDE's current round of revisions. Most, if not all bulleted items in the previous Core Content, were covered across the six forms of the test every year, which provided maximum (almost 100%) Core Content coverage by school and provided teachers relative assurance of what would be covered on the test. Thus, the assessment gave a school score based on approximately 100% coverage of the Core Content across the school. However, the assessment did not allow for a valid and reliable student accountability measure because the students were not taking substantially the same test items in order to allow for comparative student test data. If the assessment were lengthened sufficiently to have 100% Core Content coverage for every student, every year, it would be prohibitively long.	The Core Content standards have been revised and the revisions have resulted in a narrowing of the standards and a tighter focus on what teachers need to teach. This will require fewer assessment items to ensure Core Content coverage. In order to be responsive to the field and allow for use of the assessment for student accountability, 100% coverage of the Core Content standards within a single year may not be able to be achieved or necessary. Or, other methods to assure sufficient Core Content coverage, such as increasing the number of forms to be used may be necessary. Considerations regarding Core Content alignment are included in the assessment design recommendations above.	Staff's recommendation attempts to balance: *the need for adequate Core Content coverage; *the need to identify to teachers what is "fair game" to be tested; and *the need to be valid as a low-stakes student accountability measure while maximizing what can be accomplished within financial parameters and time constraints for administration.	NTAPAA noted test design should involve technical and policy decisions that balance between content coverage and comparability at the student level. NTAPAA members tended to emphasize the advantages of a simpler test design that would speed processing, allow for greater student comparability, and allow for student sub-score reporting. NTAPAA members emphasized the advantages for test design of having a very focused content specification.

NTAPAA recommended developing and pre-equating several forms, if possible. Development should include enough to release a substantial number of items. NTAPAA discussed in some detail possible designs for the assessment with one member feeling the design could be all custom for every grade level, or an all augmented norm-referenced test (NRT) for every grade level. He felt that an augmented NRT could provide several advantages. Other NTAPAA members felt alignment was very important, and expressed some skepticism that an NRT could meet the state's content standards adequately. All agreed that any NRT proposal must include more than the vendor's assertion of the level of alignment with Kentucky's content standards. In addition, issues such as equating and differential sensitivity to improvement in |

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				performance across the NRT/custom portions would need to be addressed.
Common vs. Matrix Design; Release of Items	The current test design is a 100% matrix test item design. This means that all test items are required to be secure and none will be released after they have been scored. A matrix system saves money because item development is costly and to the extent items can be reused, new items do not have to be developed as frequently. However, matrix systems do not allow teachers to see the specific items on which their students' scores are based to improve their instruction or provide targeted assistance. Matrix systems are generally not used for student accountability because the items are not the same across forms; thus, they are generally not comparable, except through complex statistical models. The opposite of a matrix design is a common test item design. A 100% common design means that none of the test items are secure, and all test items will be released after scoring. A common system is expensive due to the need for continuous item development and it has less content coverage. However, because the same items are given to each student, they are reliable and valid for student accountability measures and are useful to teachers.	Staff recommends a combination of common and matrix test item design to allow the CATS assessment to provide a measure of both school and student accountability. Through a combination of common and matrix design, matrix items will be held as secure and reused on subsequent tests, and some of the common items will be released so that teachers may score them and use that score, if they choose, as a local accountability measure. Teachers can benefit from having access to the item and knowing how students performed on it.	Staff recommends the use of a combined common and matrix design as recommended by NTAPAA to accommodate concerns from the field by allowing the assessment to address a broader number of purposes, including student accountability.	NTAPAA agreed on the need for a combined common and matrix design. They engaged in a wide-ranging discussion that included several different possibilities of how such a design might be structured, the technical possibilities and difficulties involved with several of those options.

NTAPAA focused on a test design of a common core, or single form, for all students. A different, comparable (but not strictly parallel) form would be administered each year. Student scores (overall score for the content area plus some sub-scores) could be based solely on the common core. This common core could be supplemented with matrix items. The matrix items could be used for school accountability. They felt that use of matrix items for student scores was also feasible, given a substantial common core, but there would be drawbacks in more complex processing and provision of student sub-scores. |
| **Norm-Referenced Measure** | The current NRT is administered at the End of Primary, 6, and 9 (in 2006 will go to an augmented NRT as the method to | The RFP asks vendors for different approaches. Staff prefers that the NRT be accomplished through embedding NRT items in the KCCT in 3 – | Embedding NRT items in the KCCT would allow for a single test administration rather than multiple test administrations, which | NTAPAA members agreed that there should be a single test design across all grade levels for reading and mathematics. There |

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	obtain 3 – 8 reading and math scores for NCLB). The current NRT is a separate off-the-shelf NRT. The open-response and multiple-choice KCCT is a criterion-referenced test that provides information about how well students are doing as measured against a standard, in this case Kentucky's Core Content. A norm-referenced measure provides information to parents and interested parties about how students are doing as compared to a representative sample of students who took the test during the norming year. The CTBS/5 was normed in 1996. Kentucky statutes require the statewide assessment to include a norm-referenced measure. For 2006, the need to quickly specify a plan for 2006 NCLB compliance resulted in use (for 2006 only) of the KCCT with an augmented NRT in a way that did not provide for weighting across grades as equally as would have been desired.	8 reading and math. Other options could be that the NRT be assessed as it has previously been done, at grades 3, 6, and 9 in reading and math through a separate off-the-shelf NRT administered at a separate time from the KCCT, or that the NRT be assessed at grades 3 – 8 in reading and math through a separate off-the-shelf NRT administered at the same time from the KCCT. Staff recommends that there be a single test design across all grade levels for reading and mathematics, not a mix of augmented NRT and KCCT, as will occur in 2006.	should allow for less assessment-related disruption to instructional time in the schools. Administering the assessment in grades 3 – 8 would provide a longitudinal measure as required by law. It is anticipated that embedding might be a less expensive means for including a NRT. Staff recommends that regardless of the design adopted, the assessment design must be comparable across grade levels.	should not be a mix of augmented NRT and KCCT of very different designs, as will be the case for 2006 (and probably 2007), when an augmented NRT and the KCCT will both be administered. NTAPAA discussed in some detail possible designs for the assessment with one member feeling the design could be an all custom for every grade level, or an all augmented norm-referenced test (NRT) for every grade level. He felt that an augmented NRT could provide several advantages. Other NTAPAA members felt alignment was very important, and expressed some skepticism that an NRT could meet the state's content standards adequately.
Longitudinal Measure	The current RFP does not contain a means for the longitudinal measure of individual student growth.	Staff recommends a longitudinal measure that could be accomplished through a vertical scaling approach once final decisions regarding assessment design have been made.	A longitudinal measure to allow tracking of progress of a single group of students over time has long been desired by the field and was originally anticipated as an element to be included in the assessment. The original assessment design over grade spans did not effectively allow for this type of measure but the inclusion of the 3–8 reading and math assessments will allow this possibility with the use of psychometric processes.	NTAPAA discussed various options for scaling for monitoring student longitudinal growth for the reading and math assessments. They pointed out that care would need to be taken with vertically moderated standards or with a vertical scale (single scale across the entire grade span or single scales across fewer grades). NTAPAA did not recommend a particular scaling method, and agreed that the Request for Proposals (RFP) should seek

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				demonstration of competence from the vendor because a specific longitudinal scaling approach could only be specified after many other details of test design had been specified.
Assessment Delivery and Scoring	The assessment is currently a paper and pencil assessment that is delivered, picked up and scored by an out-of-state vendor.	Staff recommends that the RFP request from vendors' proposals outline a progression from a paper/pencil assessment scored by an out-of-state vendor to an in-state on-line assessment delivery with the scoring process using Kentucky teachers.	The future of assessment is in on-line delivery, since this reflects the way that students will be required to work and demonstrate their knowledge in the 21st century workplace. On-line scoring is necessary to meet the demands of teachers and schools that need assessment results immediately to identify areas of student weakness and plan interventions to remediate those weaknesses before students fall further behind. While this will require initial infrastructure expenditures, schools will be able to benefit from improvements planned by the state. Eventually, this will provide time and cost savings, allow for state funds to remain within the state, provide opportunities for teacher professional development, and allow for teacher preparation programs to more tightly align their curricula to the skills currently needed in the classroom.	Not addressed by NTAPAA.
Item Development	The vendor manages the item development process with input from KDE staff. The vendor's contract requires the participation of Kentucky teachers in Content Advisory Committees that are heavily involved in item development. A Bias Review Committee process is also included as a part of the contract with the	At this time, staff recommends continuation of the current item development process while capacity is being developed within the state.	Consideration is being given to including universities in the item development process and in development of the formative assessment items. Including universities in the formative item development process would in the future provide additional opportunities for teacher professional development and allow for teacher	NTAPAA indicated it would be important to have considerable coordination between the two systems; they mentioned that in their view, a single vendor might be better able to produce such tightly coordinated materials, although the actual delivery might be by another vendor.

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	vendor.		preparation programs to more tightly align their curricula to the skills currently needed in the classroom.	
Writing Assessment: Number of on-demand writing prompts per student	Currently, a single on-demand prompt is used and the student is given 90-minutes to respond.	Staff recommends one prompt and at least one more additional prompt, (with consideration of potentially more), within the allocated time (currently 90-minutes) due to the inherent unreliability of the single prompt format in reporting at the individual level.	Splitting of the ninety-minute writing prompt time into multiple prompts will increase the validity and reliability of the on- demand assessment while not adding any additional time to the student assessment.	In a lengthy discussion, NTAPAA strongly stated its reservations about using a single prompt for on-demand writing assessment used for any student stakes, including college placement. This position was based on the inherent unreliability of a one-item assessment, no matter how stringent the scoring.
Writing Assessment: Piloting of scoring process	Currently, the holistic scoring method is used for the writing assessment.	KBE already endorsed using a holistic/analytical scoring method for the writing portfolio and an analytical scoring process for the on-demand portion. Additionally, staff recommends piloting the scoring method to confirm the soundness of the model and that it works as predicted.	The holistic/analytical scoring method for the portfolio will provide a holistic score and analytical feedback to teachers, and the analytical scoring process on the on-demand will provide more instructional feedback than current holistic scoring. The pilot of the scoring method was supported by NTAPAA so that any problems could be detected before going live with the process in the new assessment.	NTAPAA stated that the final policy decision on the scoring process/rubric should be informed by empirical studies and the nature of the rubric itself.

Panel members stated that six traits (criterion) may not provide reliable or meaningful feedback and some members felt that two traits may be more efficient and meaningful. |
| **Writing Assessment: Writing portfolio review/audit, sampling structure and score change procedure** | Currently, the portfolio audit verifies scoring accuracy for randomly and purposefully selected schools. 10,000 portfolios are audited from approximately 100 schools. | KBE previously endorsed regional level scoring sessions using a sampling of school populations.

Due to NTAPAA comments on the structure of the portfolio review, KDE staff further recommends a two-phase process for the portfolio review as recommended by NTAPAA (See the last column titled NTAPAA Comments, pages 9-10.). | KBE endorsed the regional scoring because it would involve more Kentucky teachers than the current state auditing process and the sampling would include all schools in the review process.

The two-phase process would provide an overview of statewide scoring accuracy and an opportunity to correct widely discrepant scores. | NTAPAA emphasized that the sampling design of the portfolio review should reflect the purpose for the review. For example, if the primary purpose is to enhance credibility and a sense of fairness in the field, then more schools should be sampled each year. If the primary purpose is to adjust scores by school, then fewer schools should be sampled in greater depth. Some compromise between these two positions will probably be necessary, given the likely constraints of time and money. On promising option would be to design the review so that schools would have a high |

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				probability of being sampled over a biennium (e.g., 30-40% sample of schools, randomly sampled per year, with replacement; a modest number of purposefully selected schools could be included). The number of portfolios sampled per school would depend on the desired statistical power to detect a likely event, e.g., a discrepancy of scoring of a certain amount, given a certain distribution of scores. The sampling approach would provide a strong estimate of writing portfolio performance and scoring accuracy for the state. Assuming the portfolio review would adjust portfolio scores of record, and thereby adjust school accountability scores, NTAPAA recommended that preferably all portfolios be rescored, rather than a sample. One way to do this would be a two-stage review, where schools that exceeded a certain level of discrepant scores would have all their portfolios rescored. NTAPAA recognized that this may be operationally infeasible and could not satisfy the Board's directive to review substantially more schools without significantly requiring more resources in time and money. Another option would be to adjust only the scores from the sample included in the review. A third option would be to recast the school's scores based on the review results. NTAPAA was less approving of this approach.

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Writing Assessment: Addressing inappropriate and ineffective practices - Code of Ethics and professional development	Currently, there is a Code of Ethics for the writing assessment that lays out the parameters for acceptable test administration.	Per NTAPAA's advice, KDE staff recommends that the Code of Ethics be transformed into an administration manual that addresses appropriate instructional strategies in development of potential portfolio entries. Guidance would be included regarding reasonable number of drafts, a definition of draft and avoidance of practices that diminish student ownership. More definition will be given to this "administration manual" at the June KBE meeting.	A very specific administration manual and intensive professional development provide the means to solve problems associated with the portfolio that have been reported by the field.	NTAPAA indicated that a strengthened administration manual and a robust professional development plan would be more effective ways to address inappropriate and ineffective practices.
	As to professional development, this is provided annually for writing cluster leaders on scoring.	As per NTAPAA's advice, staff recommends a "robust" professional development plan. This will be further defined at the June KBE meeting.		
Assessing Student Readiness for Postsecondary Education	None. KDE incorporated a request for such an assessment as part of the 1999 RFP but did not receive fundable proposals.	Staff recommends that the RFP include a request for an assessment at the eighth grade level to measure middle school students' readiness for high school curricula and at the tenth grade level to measure high school students' readiness for successful postsecondary placement.	Several developments since the previous RFP, including the merging of higher education and workforce expectations, the desire for all students to be prepared for postsecondary education and the emerging P-16 agenda, have led KDE to recommend that the next RFP include an assessment component to measure readiness toward successful college placement. This could be accomplished through augmentations or through a separate assessment at the end of middle school (eighth grade) and tenth grade.	Not addressed by NTAPAA.

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Partnership with University of Kentucky and the Regional Universities	None.	KDE is beginning a partnership with the University of Kentucky and the regional state universities around assessment issues. Some of the initial issues of interest include the item development process, in-state teacher scoring, on-line assessment, and psychometric issues. The universities have indicated a desire to have greater involvement in the development and implementation of formative, end-of-course, on-line and accountability assessment processes.	As indicated above, including universities in K-12 assessment processes will provide multiple opportunities for increased knowledge, understanding and collaboration by all parties.	Not addressed by NTAPAA.